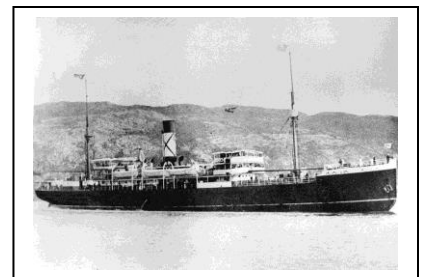




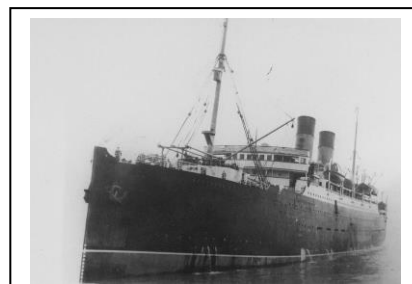
Private John Charles Crane (Regimental Number 4074) is interred in Tyne Cot Cemetery – Grave reference XXV. F. 15.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, John Crane was a recruit of the Seventeenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on November 6, 1917, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested on that same day.



Private Crane did not embark for overseas service until some five weeks later again, the date December 11, when he boarded the Bowring Brothers' Red Cross Line vessel *Florizel* (right above) en route for Halifax.

But it was not from Halifax that Private Crane sailed on His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* (right) to the United Kingdom. The draft embarked in the port of St. John, New Brunswick, on or about December 18 before departure on the morrow. *Missanabie* then docked in Glasgow on December 31, New Year's Eve.



Having disembarked in Scotland, the Newfoundland contingent entrained for the short journey to the Regimental Depot. By this time, the Depot at Ayr had already been in existence serving as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for well over two years, with a temporary move to the town of Barry in the summer of 1917. Private Crane was to be in Ayr for just some two weeks longer before being transferred southward to another camp.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

In the New Year of 1918, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the cathedral city of Winchester. This transfer was finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was to be from Hazely Down that Private Crane was to be despatched, in July, to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.

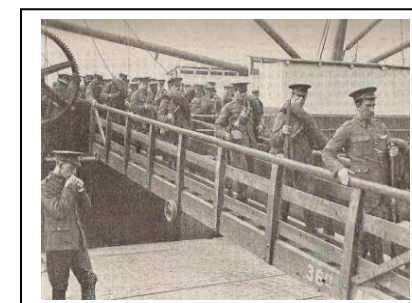


(Right above: *a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – from The War Illustrated*)

On or about July 2, either the 47th or the 48th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Crane one of this contingent - from Hazely Down, passed through the English port of Folkestone and, on the 5th, arrived at the French city of Rouen, for final training and organization* at the British Expeditionary Force Depot there, before finding its way to 1st Battalion.

Only days afterwards, on July 8 – although *his* file says the 9th - he was surely one of the detachment of one-hundred twenty-eight *other ranks* from Rouen that reported *to duty* with the Newfoundland parent unit at Équihen on the French west coast.

(Right: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)



(continued)

****Apparently, the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.***

Meanwhile, just days after the crisis of the German spring offensive had passed, on April 24 – and some eleven weeks before Private Crane’s arrival at Équihen - the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion officially had said farewell to their comrades-in-arms of 88th Brigade and 29th Division and on the morrow had participated in a recessional parade attended by the officer commanding 88th Brigade, Brigadier Freyberg.

They would later be deployed to another unit, but for the summer of 1918 1st Battalion was to move a world away from Flanders where it had just fought, to be stationed on the west coast of France.

On April 29, the Newfoundlanders – 1st Battalion by now reduced to a total strength of just thirty officers and four-hundred sixty-four other ranks - took train in Belgium for the French coastal town of Étapes, where they arrived at eleven o’clock in the late evening. For now, for them, the fighting was a thing of the past.

The summer of 1918 was to pass peaceably enough for most of the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May, June and until early July, the unit was posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.



(Right: Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion’s posting to GHQ – from Illustration)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

****Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.***

The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équihen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere.



This was, of course, both the time and place of Private Crane’s reporting to duty in the field with 1st Battalion.

(Right above: a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équihen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

Re-enforced, the Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it would finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (*Ingooigem*).

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge.



After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again to be a conflict of movement.

(Right above: *British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days – from Illustration*)

**This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.*

The son of John Crane*, labourer, and Susannah Crane (née *Barrett*, deceased June 19, 1916) of Tilton in the District of Harbour Grace, he was also brother to Edward-Joseph, to Emily-Jane, Sarah-May, Norman-Howard, Bertha-Olivia – to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - and to James-Andrew.



Private Crane was reported as having been *killed in action* in Belgium, on September 29, 1918, while fighting near Dadizeele during the *Hundred Days Offensive*.

John Charles Crane had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and seven months: date of birth, March 21, 1898.

(Right above: *the re-constructed village of Dadizeele (today Dadizele) just to the north of which the Newfoundlanders dug in on the evening of September 29, 1918 – photograph from 2013*)

**He re-married in January of 1918, to a widow, Rosanna Grealey.*

Private John Charles Crane was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

(continued)



Hr Grace
Aug 6th

Lieut Col. Rendell

Dear Sir

I have been informed that some of my deceased Brother 4074 Private John c. Crane's money may have been delivered to my father at tilton. As my brother left his allotment to me (Bertha Crane) I want to know how it came that my father (John Crane) got my cheques.

If my father got my cheque I am going to see what can be done, or if my dead brothers money could be given to anyone else after his death. please oblige me by telling me when the last Money was sent and who too. By doing so you will oblige.

Bertha Crane
Devonshire Rd.
Harbor Grace
Nfld.

Note on letter: Mr John Crane received \$33.62 (decided as administrator of will by Supreme Court of Nfld)

(Right: The sacrifice of Private Crane is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Spaniard's Bay. – photograph from 2010)

